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| Planning Reference No: | 09/3921C |
| Application Address: | Land to the rear of 155, Heath Road, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 2LE. |
| Proposal: | Proposed Two Pairs of Semi-Detached Dwellings, Associated Parking and Landscaping. |
| Applicant: | Mr C Lowe |
| Application Type: | Full Planning |
| Ward: | Sandbach |
| Registration Date: | 26-November-2009 |
| Earliest Determination Date: | 28-December-2009 |
| Expiry Date: | 21-January-2010 |
| Date report Prepared | 18-December-2009 |
| Constraints: | None |

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE on the grounds that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area.

MAIN ISSUES:

- Principle of Residential Development
- Policy
- Character and Appearance
- Residential Amenity
- Highways

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

Councillor R. Bailey has called the application in for consideration by the Southern Committee on the grounds that the proposed development complies with Policy GR2 of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review, with particular reference to sub para. D. Cllr Bailey states that the proposals will not detract from the existing visual nature of the neighbouring properties, the street scene and the locality generally.

2. PREVIOUS MEETING

At the Planning Committee meeting held on 6th January 2010, members resolved to defer this application in order to undertake a site visit. No further issues have been raised since this visit.

3. DESCRIPTION AND SITE CONTEXT

The application site comprises an area of land situated at the rear of three properties fronting the northern side of Heath Road in Sandbach. The site is located on the western side of Skeath Close, a residential cul-de-sac comprising of similar two-storey and

bungalow properties linked up to one another to make up 3 rows of terraces. The site measures approximately 0.8ha and is configured in an 'L' shape. The site lies within the Sandbach settlement zone line as designated in the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First review (2005).

4. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the erection of two pairs of semi-detached dwellings, associated parking and landscaping. The proposal comprises of two blocks. The first block (numbers 17 and 18) would be positioned parallel with the existing row of properties on the far western side of the close. The second block (numbers 19 and 20) would be positioned at right angles to the first block and the properties found on the opposite side of the close towards the east. An additional 6 car parking spaces would be provided along the frontage of the proposed units forming numbers 17 and 18 and alongside number 19.

5. RELEVANT HISTORY

20661/1 – Outline application for 2 semi-detached bungalows and garages. Approved 08.11.1989

08/0507/OUT - Proposed residential development. Withdrawn 24.06.2008

08/1589/OUT - Outline permission for two dwellings. Approved 13.11.2008

6. POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1 Spatial Principles

DP 3 Promote Sustainable Economic Development

DP 4 Make the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure

DP 5 Manage Travel Demand; Reduce the Need to Travel

DP7 Promote Environmental Quality

L4 Regional Housing Provision

Local Plan Policy

PS4 Towns

GR1 New Development

GR2 Design

GR3 Residential Development

GR5 Landscaping

GR6 Amenity & Health

GR7 Amenity & Health

GR8 Pollution

GR9 Accessibility, servicing and parking provision

GR18 Traffic Generation

H1 Provision of New Housing Development

H2 Provision of New Housing Development

H4 Residential Development in Towns

SPG1 Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments

SPG2 Provision of Private Open Space in Residential Developments

Other Material Considerations

PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development'

PPS3 'Housing'

7. CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

Environmental Health:

No comments received at the time of report preparation.

8. VIEWS OF SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

No comments received at the time of report preparation.

9. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

No comments received at the time of report preparation.

10. APLLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning Statement (Design & Access Statement)

11. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Residential Development

The application site is located within the settlement zone line for Congleton where according to Policy PS4 there is a general presumption in favour of development provided that it is in keeping with the town's scale and character and does not conflict with other policies. With regard to housing development, policies H1 and H2 relate to the supply of housing land.

The most recent housing land position statement for the former borough of Congleton demonstrates that the Council does not have a five-year land supply and as such proposals for residential development are being considered favourably. Additionally, Policy H4 outlines a series of criteria to be met when assessing residential development in towns. This includes the sustainability of the site and compliance with other local plan policies. The site is in a sustainable location on the easterly edge of Sandbach where it is within walking distance of the town centre and is easily accessible and well connected to public transport and community facilities and services. As such, the principle of residential development on the site would be acceptable subject to accordance with other local plan policies.

Policy

Policy GR2 of the adopted local plan requires that development is sympathetic to the character, appearance and form of the site and the surrounding area in terms of, the height, scale, form and grouping of the building(s); the choice of materials; external design features, including signage and street furniture; and the visual, physical and functional relationship of the proposal to neighbouring properties, the street scene and to the locality generally.

Character and Appearance

Along Heath Road, the area is characterised by rows of traditional terraced properties. At various intervals along Heath Road, roads providing access to cul-de-sacs interrupt the development. The cul-de-sac that this site is located on has a wide junction with Heath Road and coupled with the fact that the properties on the eastern side of the junction are bungalows; the aspect of the close is one of openness. As such, when travelling up Heath Road particularly in a westerly direction, there are clear views across the rear garden of 155 Heath Road (part of the application site) into the close itself and into fields beyond towards the north.

The proposal comprises of two blocks of semi-detached dwellings. The first block would be positioned parallel with the existing row of properties on the far western side of the close and it is considered that this would fill in an existing toothless gap within the street scene. The second block would be positioned at right angles to the first block and the properties found on the western side of the close. In order to respect the amenities of the first block of dwellings proposed and the existing dwellings to the rear on Heath Road, the second block would be sited hard up against the edge of the entrance to Skeath Close and almost centrally within the close itself. The second block would travel past the sidewall of number 155 by c4 metres and because of its forward positioning within the close; the openness described above would be punctuated and harmed detrimentally. Owing to their two-storey form and prominent positioning in an isolated space, the units making up block 2 would be visually intrusive, overbearing and harmful to views across the close. Further the gable making up the end unit (no. 20) would be perceptibly dominant.

Whilst the appearance of the proposed units would mimic the style of those properties found within the existing close, and the applicant proposes to plant 2 trees to the rear of block 2 (numbers 19 and 20) these considerations would not reduce the harm in terms of the siting, scale and form. With regard to planting, in order for the specimens to successfully minimise the visual harm and soften the appearance of the dwellings, they would have to be quite large and this would unacceptably reduce the light afforded to the rear gardens and the rear elevation of the end unit number 20. As such, the scheme is considered to be at variance with criterion (I) sub paragraph 'A' of policy GR2 as well as sub paragraph 'D' which state that proposals must be sympathetic to the character, appearance and form of the site and surrounding area in terms of height, scale, form, grouping of the buildings, the visual, physical, and functional relationship of the proposal to neighbouring properties, the street scene and to the locality generally.

PPS1 states "good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted." It is considered that this proposal fails to respect these principles as in its present form it is considered that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to this advice as well as that contained within RSS policy EM1(C) and Local Plan policies GR1 and GR2.

Residential Amenity

The positioning of the proposed dwellings would allow sufficient separation distances to be achieved between the existing and proposed dwellings within the close and to the south on

Heath Road. In terms of private amenity space, each dwelling would benefit from approximately 60 sq metres and given that the units would be small 2 bedroom dwellings, this level of provision is deemed to be acceptable.

Highways

As yet, no comments have been received from Highways, however, given that the scheme is similar to the previously withdrawn application for which the Strategic Highways Manager had no objections, the proposed parking and access arrangements are deemed to be acceptable.

12. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The principle of residential development on the site is considered to be acceptable and at the present time, approval of the application would not compromise the position with regards to housing land supply. However, the provision of 2 of the units (numbers 19 and 20) would by reason of their siting, two-storey form, and scale would unacceptably harm the visual amenities of the area and would not therefore comply with policies GR1 and GR2 of the development plan. As such, Members are advised to refuse the application.

13. RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reason:

1. The proposed development (units 19 and 20) by virtue of their siting, two-storey form, and scale would be visually overbearing and intrusive and would therefore materially harm the character and appearance of the street scene and views into Skeath Close. The proposal is therefore contrary to PPS1 and Policies GR1 and GR2 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan, which seek to secure good design which is appropriate to the character, appearance and form of the site and surrounding area.

